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13 Aug 52

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Information contained in this report is extracted from a memorandum written in German which Bruno KALNINS gave to [ ] KALNINS stated that he had had numerous talks with the [ ] and was writing his memorandum because of the importance which the Latvian-language VOA broadcasts apparently had in Latvia. It should be recalled that KALNINS is a strong political figure in Latvian refugee politics, and that certain of the views of the [ ] probably are KALNINS' own opinion of these points, although since the [ ] are young working men they may actually have said the things which KALNINS has written in his report.

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FORM NO. 89-00  
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74-7-208-401-21

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Subject: Latvian View of VOA Broadcasts Report No: WSS-1839

Date of Information: Prior to June 1952

Place Acquired: Sweden, Stockholm

Date Acquired: 11 August 1952

Evaluation: F-6

Date of Report: 13 August 1952

Source: Latvian Social Democratic leader  
from five recent Latvian escapees

1. Voice of America broadcasts in the Latvian language are widely listened to in Latvia, and the inauguration of the broadcasts apparently was popular throughout the country. Latvians are encouraged by the broadcasts, which they regard as a sign that the free world has not forgotten their country. Between 1945 and 1951 no foreign broadcasts in the Latvian language were received in Latvia, and there was considerable pessimism over the position of the western powers toward Latvia and the other Baltic states. When the Latvian-language VOA broadcasts began in 1951, informants said that it was taken as the basis for a new feeling of hope and an indication that the United States and the democratic world remembered Latvia.

2. Informants say that Latvians are especially glad to hear broadcasts which have some direct bearing on their own life. Criticisms of the Communist system and attacks against individual Communist leaders are well received. Almost a year after the broadcast, informants still recalled points which were mentioned against Vilis LACIS, current chairman of the presidium of Soviet-Latvia. They feel that more direct and concrete attacks against KALNBERZINS, OZOLINS, LACIS and other government or Communist Party officials in Latvia would be of value.

3. Informants point out that there are about 120,000 Latvian refugees in the free world. They assert that their relatives in Latvia are very much interested in the activities of these refugees wherever they may be throughout the world. Informants think that the VOA broadcasts concerning their own escape probably have caused considerable comment in Latvia.

4. Informants assert that although the VOA broadcasts are popular, it is felt that they should adopt a more definite policy on the question of the future of Latvia. Latvians are happy that the United States has not recognized the Soviet annexation of their country, and they welcome news of the growing military strength of western Europe, but at the same time, many Latvians feel that Latvia is an eastern European state, and they wonder why the VOA broadcasts do not mention some plan which might exist for the eventual freeing of Latvia from Soviet control. Latvians responded to VOA broadcasts concerning free elections in East Germany with the question, "Why do they only ask for free elections in East Germany and not in Latvia?" Informants think that as long as the VOA broadcasts do not indicate that the western powers have taken a firm stand on the question of future Latvia, all political activity in Latvia must necessarily be restricted.

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5. As working men, informants regret that the VOA broadcasts hardly ever contain information on the international activities of the labor movement, and specifically, that the VOA does not broadcast information on the Latvian labor movement in exile. They say that the Communist radio in Riga sometimes broadcasts attacks on the activities of Latvian Social Democrats and labor leaders in exile, but that the VOA never gives them any idea of what these leaders actually may be doing or what they are attempting to do. Informants point out that most people in Latvia are working people, and they think that VOA programs on labor questions would have considerable appeal. Informants also think that the VOA broadcasts do not recognize the great differences between the life of Latvian refugees and of Latvians who live in Latvia itself. They assert that the workers of Latvia probably are somewhat radical politically and they have socialist sympathies, and they feel that VOA broadcasts should attempt to appeal to these sympathies. *is interest*
6. Informants, all of whom are between 21 and 28 years of age, feel that young people in Latvia have very little idea of the essence and functions of democracy. They believe that VOA broadcasts which described the democratic process would be well received and they assert that VOA broadcasts explaining various exile Latvian refugee political parties and their functions would be of interest, if only to show that these parties do exist. They think that former Latvian politicians who are living in exile should be used to make broadcasts to Latvia. They wonder why the VOA did not broadcast a program to refute the Communist First of May program, by explaining to Latvia something of the activities of free workers. Informants do not feel that it is correct to use the May First broadcast only to transmit anti-Communist worker propaganda, and they say that May First is popular among Latvian workers as a holiday despite the element of official force which is associated with it in Latvia.
7. The informants state that the transmissions of the VOA to Latvia are too limited, and that a single fifteen minute program cannot suffice to supply the necessary information and political explanations which Latvian listeners desire to hear.

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